

High Level Political Forum

April 1, 2016

Greetings. I am Aameena Mohyuddin Zia.

As a Pakistan civil society representative at the UN, I represent Family Education Services Foundation, an educational NGO based in Pakistan and the American Pakistan Foundation, which is an umbrella organization for various social development NGOs.

In the context of inclusivity, we believe that stakeholders can enrich the work of the HLPF. However, we must realize that it requires a certain political will, commitment on the parts of the governments and the UN system, along with financial support. We strongly suggest that funding modalities be identified to support participation of civil society in all levels of HLPF activities, in a manner that is equitable and inclusive and supports the rights-based sustainable development. We must recognize that not all CSOs have a presence in NY, nor do they have funding available to engage in the HLPFs. Therefore, we must find a way to support all and equitable participation.

FESF strongly recommends that participation of marginalized and disadvantaged people must be ensured, including providing financial support for travel, technology, and assistive services (ex: sign language interpreters), so as to leave no one behind.

We stress that although civil society participation does exist on the international level, it is not formalized in a structure manner at the national level in the developing countries. It is unclear as to how civil society itself, and its participation, is defined.

We encourage HLPF to recommend guidelines for national reviews to member states to ensure that CSO participation is in fact in line with the international precedent so that structural interface with existing communities is fostered and maintained.

As outlined by other CSOs, we also assert that shadow reports of civil society should be included and discussed at the HLPF, in addition to the state-led reviews. We recommend that national and regional CSOs, especially those considered experts in their fields with decades of experience and scalability, be permitted to submit data within the global review process and present written and oral contributions with formal incorporation into the state-led thematic and country reviews.

In the context of practices to engage stakeholders, the American Pakistan Foundation believes that participation of civil society and stakeholders is a key variable of successful monitoring and review at the HLPF. The HLPF should provide transparent and inclusive space for participation with access to all data from all levels and be granted the opportunity to prepare their inputs based on the available data. It is important for stakeholders to participate at all levels in the follow up and review: national, regional, global and thematic... especially if they participate in partnerships.

Also, as suggested by the Conference of NGOs, we strongly agree that a parallel civil society forum would be more beneficial outside of the UN and free of political constraints... a space where civil society can candidly engage in discussions to inform the HLPF.

In closing, we believe that meaningful participation of major groups and other stakeholders is essential to ensuring a robust and participatory follow up and review process. We feel strongly that a people-centered sustainable development agenda must permit individuals and civil society organizations to actively participate in the reviews, as well as submit shadow reports.

We must create an enabling environment with a specific space at the national level.

Thank you for your attention.